



Broadband Programme Update – June 2013

Since Shropshire Council announced contract finalisation in March 2013, Connecting Shropshire has moved into the mobilisation phase of the programme.

The Partnership – Shropshire Council and BT

As part of the programme BT and Shropshire Council have committed to work closely as a partnership. Both organisations have been actively recruiting to their teams to ensure they have the appropriate skills and experience to deliver the commitments announced in March;

- A governance structure has been put into place to ensure that there is full visibility and accountability within the partnership. Andrew Evans (Head of Business Growth and Prosperity) will be the Senior Responsible Officer for the programme representing Shropshire Council. Chris Taylor will manage the 'day to day' programme for Shropshire Council and reports directly to Andrew. Councillor Steve Charmley (Member for Whittington and Cabinet member) takes on the role of portfolio holder for the programme with support from his deputy portfolio holder, Councillor Tina Woodward (Member for Alveley and Claverley);
- Shropshire has recruited Morag Banks as Project Administrator. Morag joins the team to support and coordinate project activities. In addition, Kevin Johnson has been appointed as Contract Officer. Kevin brings a wealth of technical and project management experience to the team. Kevin was previously been employed by BT plc as a lead programme manager for infrastructure 'plan and build' projects including the 21st Century Network (21CN) programme that has transformed the traditional PSTN (public switched telephone network) to a full Internet Protocol (IP) network;
- BT has appointed Rob Jones to the position of Project Manager. Rob Jones will coordinate the programme on behalf of BT Plc. Rob is an experienced BT project and programme practitioner with many years of successful project and programme delivery and a longstanding career within BT across Engineering, Sales, Marketing and Portfolio functions;
- Daniel Czyzyk joins the Connecting Shropshire programme as Openreach Project Manager. Dan will be responsible for the planning and delivery commitments. Dan was responsible for Openreach's pre-planning and bid into Connecting Shropshire as part of procurement;
- The Partnership programme team meet weekly on an operational level, monthly for Programme Boards and quarterly for Strategic reviews. The aim is to ultimately co-locate the partnership team in Shrewsbury.

Launch Event

More than 100 representatives from businesses, councillors and community organisations attended the launch event hosted at Shrewsbury Town Football Club on May 31st. The purpose of the event was to explain how the programme will operate and communicate. For full details of the event, including the presentation slides and pictures please visit the Connecting Shropshire Website. Alternatively please ask one of the Community Action Team for a copy of the presentation.



Refreshed Connecting Shropshire brand

As part of the transition from procurement through to mobilisation, the Connecting Shropshire brand has been developed to reflect this significant milestone. The 'Building a Broadband Future' theme emphasizes the 'shift' to constructing and enabling the network for access.

Postcode Checker

The Connecting Shropshire programme was introduced to provide better broadband to areas that were not currently part of existing deployment by commercial providers. Within the Shropshire Council area there are 142,000 defined premises. Of these 72,000 premises form part of the Connecting Shropshire programme area. To check whether you are part of the Connecting Shropshire programme area we have developed a postcode checker. This will tell residents and businesses if their premises form part of the programme defined intervention area. Please note the checker will only work for a postcode that is within the Shropshire Council area (excluding Telford and Wrekin).

The BT Openreach checker has been updated accordingly to show associated exchanges across Shropshire as 'under evaluation', see:

<http://www.superfast-openreach.co.uk/where-and-when/>

It's a 'big job'

This programme aims to provide 93% of Shropshire premises with a fibre solution. This is a big job but is not starting from scratch. BT will be building off their existing commercial deployments and this will, in part determine the phasing. Each phase is planned and built to optimise the money we have available. There will be 9 phases through the programme which will complete in Spring 2016. Each phase has 4 distinct stages:

- Pre-planning – assessment of network resources
- Prepare Exchange – assess and plan the equipment and power requirements that are needed
- Planning the Network – carry out physical inspections of ducts and cabinets
- Installation of network resources – fibre and network deployment

Phase 1 is already underway and you will soon start to see engineers in some areas carrying out inspections. We are planning to announce those areas that will form part of Phase 1 later in the Autumn after which we will commence pre-planning work for further phases at 3-monthly intervals.

We have posted a video on our website that describes the challenges and methodology of deployment which you may find informative. If you are unable to access the link please contact the team and we will ensure we send out the video on a CD:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wSEuOB-gfDA&feature=player_embedded



Additional Funding

A £20m national DEFRA (Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs) scheme was launched in Nov 2011 and aimed to target and support the 10% hard to reach areas which would otherwise only receive 2mbps under the BDUK contract. The Rural Community Broadband Fund (RCBF) scheme has been subject to some criticism as the full details of the 10% gaps will not be evident until all surveying has been completed by BT. Without clarity to this information the process becomes constrained. We are however continuing to work with DEFRA and BT, and will ensure that where additional funding opportunities exist we make the most of them. It is however important to set the expectations for the RCBF scheme which is competitive and available to all Authorities and Communities in England. As an illustration of the potential costs for deploying fibre to premises beyond the current contracted 87% SFBB (Superfast Broadband – 24mbps) costs could exceed £6m to achieve an increase from 87% to 90%.

We are continuing to look at other supporting forms of finance to further improve the fibre broadband coverage in Shropshire including:

- £300m has been earmarked by the Government for broadband after 2015. More details of this allocation are due to be announced at the end of this month.
- The Government has signed up to delivery of the EU 2020 Digital agenda objectives. This includes a commitment to give all households a minimum speed of 30Mbps by 2020, The commitment is closely aligned to the 2014-2020 EU Structural and Investment Fund Growth Programme which will be Local Enterprise Partnership based. We are working with our colleagues in Herefordshire and Telford & Wrekin to seek opportunities to bid into this funding stream to further support these European objectives.

Digital Champions and Advocacy

Throughout the roll-out we will ensure there is full engagement through a network of stakeholders and communication channels. We will use the network of parish and town councils to ensure all communities are briefed on the deployment plans. We will build on the network of Digital Champions that already exists in the local communities.

The Rural Community Council runs a project called 'Get Shropshire Online' which provides a support network of volunteers who help people to use a computer for the first time, improve their confidence with the basics, or get online. To find out more visit:

<http://www.getshropshireonline.co.uk/about-us/digital-champions-2/>

In addition, Digital Advocates will keep colleagues, friends and communities updated on the Connecting Shropshire programme. Volunteers will also be asked to help promote the programme within their community by putting up posters and distributing leaflets in suitable locations, e.g. doctors surgeries, church halls, and local notice boards. All such promotional material will be provided by the Connecting Shropshire team. Advocates will be at the heart of communities working closely with their respective Town and Parish Councils. Please contact the Connecting Shropshire Team to become an Advocate for the programme.

**Keep updated**

We will ensure that through a variety of communication channels all residents of Shropshire can keep updated on the programme. A 'keep me informed' registration page has been developed on our website which will keep you updated on the programme's progress.

Please visit: www.connectingshropshire.co.uk

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